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METROPOLITAN

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Cover picture: Leadenhall Market taken by Matthew Haswell, see page 10.

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EDITORIAL

We do hope you enjoy reading this journal and trust that you will feel free to make your own contributions, whether the story of your London ancestors, a brick wall you need help with, a useful website or source you have found, or anything else you can think of. We have a great community of members all over the world and the Editors very much enjoy receiving items for the journal. You will notice that there are no yellow pages. If you want to find a surname interest then turn to our back page.

Did you know that *Metropolitan* journals back to July 2006 have now been added to the Members' Area of our website and are available to download? Journals from October 2006 to date have been indexed for personal names and the authors, titles and main subjects noted too, so now it is easy to search for family interests and view the results. Please note that the yellow pages of Members' Interests from past journals have been deleted as they contain the names, addresses and emails of both past and present members.

If you are looking for the ALLEN family then you may be in luck! The Society has received a number of unwanted birth, marriage and death certificates from Elaine OVERDAHL in Canada. We are always happy to receive certificates such as these and will be logging them with the aim of getting them more widely seen in due course. Please contact the Editors if you are interested in them.

We have our very first article on artificial intelligence. Paul helps our understanding of this new technology and has highlighted some of the ways that this can be used for research. Although his article is about an unhappy subject, Colin's experience of searching for inquest documents relating to a suicide gives a very helpful background on how to search for coroners' papers. We have chosen to spotlight Leadenhall Market this time because we had the lovely Christmassy photograph which we used for our cover.

We wish you all a Happy Christmas and look forward to hearing from you in the New Year with tales, snippets, *Help!* queries and any useful family history tips you may come across.

Barbara, Elizabeth and Paul, the Editorial Team

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

This is the first *Metropolitan* of our Society's year and first I would like to thank those of you who have renewed your membership and extend a warm welcome to new members. Of course, this is our December journal and that must mean that it is nearly Christmas! The holiday season often provides an opportunity for us to chat to family members who we might not see at other times of the year and therefore a really good chance to ask older members about their memories of times past and to share old photos – don't forget to write names and dates on the backs!

It is always worth recording family memories, whether on a video of the actual person speaking or just writing notes as you talk to them. I treasure the fact that my grandma told me that her grandad called his wife "My little teapot". This must have been before 1890 as he died then but it gives a charming image of the pair of them and their relationship. Make sure you include the name of the person you talk to and the date of the chat on your records as other family member's perceptions of events may be different yet equally valid. Some years ago my father was speaking about his uncle to this man's newly discovered (to us!) grandson and their views of the same chap were extraordinarily different! To one he was a sober grandfather who never left the Kings Cross area and to the other, a hard-drinking man who would come up to Barnet and finish his first pint before Dad had even had a sip.

Christmas time is also an opportunity to talk to younger family members about their history, to inspire, amuse and educate them with your genealogical tales, or at least to try! At the West Surrey FHS fair, we were visited by a chap who had created his own Happy Families card game, using real people with their correct occupations from his ancestors. It might be fun to create your own with the children in your family. I don't have a Mr Bun the baker but I do have a Mr Bickers the farrier and a Mr Bell the cordwainer.

Do have a look at our brand-new website, see page 4. This is a growing resource so please keep checking back as more information is added.

It only remains for me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year for 2024, with the best of luck for your future genealogical research.

Elizabeth Burling

INTRODUCING OUR NEW WEBSITE

www.lwmfhs.org



Take a look and explore.

The password for the MEMBERS AREA is being sent out by email for those members where we have an email address recorded for them. Members without an email address recorded should either notify the membership secretary of their email address or request the password by post.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

To say that I was surprised when I looked at the accompanying photograph of part of the Society's stall at Byng Road playing fields and the Festival re-enactments of the Battle of Barnet and the second Battle of St Albans is an understatement.

The field in question was a short walk from our house in Calvert Road and accessed via the alley at the north side of Calvert Road, passing an allotment on the right and walking the short distance to where the Society's bookstall is situated. Older brother Keith played cricket here and younger brother Joe and a few of his cronies had set up a camp where to Keith's horror, Joe, then only 13 years of age, was smoking and swearing like a trooper. Looking back, I cannot imagine that my mother did not smell the cigarette smoke on his clothes.

My schooling began in 1937 at Christ Church Infants School in St Albans Road. Miss HARBOUR, who was lovely, taught the juniors and Miss SAUER, a formidable elderly lady I avoided as much as possible as her punishments brought tears to one's eyes.

At the age of eleven I went to Byng Road School where I spent happy years until leaving at the age of 14 years. During those years my love of history, geography and sport came to the fore. I became a shooter at netball, played cricket with brother Keith and his pals and played table tennis in the large school hall.

During the last few months at Byng Road a young sports teacher, Miss HAWKINS, was engaged. She was keen to train us for the first Barnet and District School Sports Day since the declaration of war with Germany in 1939. Although I could practise long jump on a mat in the school hall, Miss HAWKINS was not satisfied and consequently a proper long jumping pit of regulation size was built where the Society's bookstall is situated but in the long grass at the top of the field. Here I could practise every day after school and at weekends. Where the Sports Day was held in 1946, I cannot now recall. I have a slight recollection it may have been held at Underhill beside Barnet Football Club's ground. I was thrilled to win and this was all due to Miss HAWKINS who made sure I learned not to fall backwards on landing, which would have reduced the jump by two feet. I believe the event was published in the *Barnet Press* but cannot recall whether we ever purchased a copy.

As well as netball and long jump my other sport was table tennis, which was also played, matches and practise, in the hall at Byng Road School. I was an

attacking player and had played against local teams in the area. One night the hall was divided in two and our men's team were playing West Green Table Tennis Club at one end and I was playing a match at the other end. Consequently I was approached by the Chairman of the club and his wife Barbara to ask me to play for their club as they were in need of a female attacking player.

I played all these sports for a number of years – even playing the famous ROWE twins at a venue on the south coast.

Anne Prudames, Member No. 254

Note: Rosalind and Diane ROWE became doubles world champions in table tennis, reaching five finals between 1951 and 1955.



JOTTING – STOP PRESS!

GRO Online View digital image news

We are delighted to have further good news regarding digital scans of historic birth and death records from the General Register Office (GRO), as reported in the September issue of *Metropolitan*, page 175. This is where the original information on certain birth and death certificates can be viewed almost immediately and for only £2.50 per item. As of 15 November, this Online View service has been extended and now covers:

Birth records from 1837 up to 100 years ago
Death records from 1837 to 1957

To access these, log in to the GRO's website as normal, then click on the box titled 'Order a Digital Image'. You will be asked if you want a birth or death image, then follow the prompts entering the information in the relevant boxes. Select the person you want from the list of names by clicking on the dot on the left – the option 'digital' should be one of those which comes up. Click on that. It will take you to a payment page and straight after that you will be able to view the image. The GRO uses WorldPay for payments so you need to have a credit card which is affiliated to Mastercard or Visa or a debit card issued in the UK.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HOW TO USE IT FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

By Paul Feetum, Member No. 8218

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is very much in the news these days and I was delighted to see that Blaine Bettinger had recorded a one-hour presentation on Findmypast's Facebook page. For those not familiar with his name, Blaine is a leading author, presenter and authority on the use of DNA in genealogical research.

Blaine's presentation¹ was entitled '10 ChatGPT prompts every genealogist should know', I thought that readers may appreciate a short summary but please do take a look at the presentation for yourself.

Although not the only AI version available, ChatGPT is the one in the news and is accessed through Google. Blaine explains that it is essentially a large language model, developed by Open AI, employing an algorithm to predict the most probable string of words arising from a given prompt. What this all means in practice is that you ask questions (called 'prompts' in this context) and it sifts through masses of material to give you the answer you request.

Note, however, that 'the most probable' does not in any sense mean or imply the most factually or grammatically correct. ChatGPT is not a high level thinker – it is a doer, dealing in words rather than facts. Blaine's great analogy is that you don't use your car to blend a smoothie. ChatGPT is a useful tool but only where its use is appropriate. Significantly, it does not pull facts from databases.

What are these 10 prompts?

1. **Please draft an email/blog post/summary...** e.g. 'please² draft an email asking a 2nd cousin to take a genetic genealogy test'. Regard the GPT output as simply a first draft which you will need to personalise.

What makes a good prompt? Try to specify:

- Role – who or what is it emulating? For example, a genealogist.
- Task – what is it analysing/doing? For example, create an email.
- Format – what is the desired output?
- Add any limitations e.g. limit to 3 paragraphs; include 2 sentences on risk of DNA testing etc.

- You can also refine your requirements to amend the first draft you get back.
 - Balance the time taken to create something from scratch and that taken to generate the prompt and edit the result.
 - Avoid confidential information going into prompts as the material can be used for machine and other training i.e. it will cease to be confidential.
2. **Please extract...** e.g. names and relationships from this obituary, will etc. Maybe request output in the form of a table. You will be prompted to input the relevant document.
 3. **Please generate...** This is more controversial and it will have GPT construct a narrative, a personal statement, historical context etc.
 4. **Please help me brainstorm...** e.g. a title/summary/outline/topic. Take care to avoid unintended plagiarism as GPT will readily plunder any available material.
 5. **Please provide information about...** an event or historical context.
 6. **Please calculate...** age at death, date of birth.
 7. **Please translate...** ‘act as translator translating the text provided below into English, from the perspective of a native [language] speaker.’
 8. **Please help me remember...** e.g. ‘what is the word for a person who receives stuff from a deceased person?’
 9. **Please help me learn...** e.g. ‘act as a teacher/professor and explain to me how Government transferred land to settlers...’ The specification of role (teacher etc.) will determine the level of detail and complexity in output.
 10. **Please transcribe....** ‘act as a genealogist. I will provide a text and you will summarise the content of the text. Use only the information in the text. You can ask for the output to be in 4-6 bullet points and can also use this approach to get an abstract of a will.

The general rule is that the less time you spend on tasks that can be automated, the more time you will have to spend on those aspects which can't be automated.

Notes of caution:

- ChatGPT deals in words NOT facts;
- ChatGPT is a do-er NOT a thinker;
- Using ChatGPT is not being lazy. You don't need to feel guilty about it. We have always used time saving devices and tools, from sharpened flints to vacuum cleaners³;
- Can I trust the content? Yes, but you do need to check and review.

There is a Facebook Group: *Genealogy and Artificial Intelligence*, which is grappling with the seismic changes this technology will bring and if this interests you, it is worth looking into.

Questions from the audience:

- Is this UK or US speak? There is some bias to the US but it draws from sources all over the world.
- Can it fact-check itself? Yes, theoretically, but Blaine Bettinger was not sure it would add anything.
- Translation of Latin? Not yet, but probably at some time in the future.
- How quickly do you get the answer? Usually within a couple of seconds. My own experience of the translation of some Portuguese bears this out.
- ChatGPT is fluent in German.

Notes:

1. https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=907124127014252
2. Please and thank you are entirely optional and ChatGPT does not need or expect them
3. You may not know this but the green leaf symbol used by Ancestry to denote a hint has been generated by AI since 2006



NEXT COPY DATE

Please remember that the copy date for the next issue of *Metropolitan* is

1 February 2024

Articles, letters, requests and comment should be sent to the Editors.

The Editors reserve the right to edit contributions.

Contributors should indicate if copy is being distributed to other family history society journals or family history magazines.

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SPOTLIGHT ON: LEADENHALL MARKET

Situated in the centre of the City of London's financial district, Leadenhall Market is on the site of the Roman Forum (also a market) and Basilica. The first Forum was erected around 70AD but this was rebuilt about 30 years later and then occupied an area larger than that of Trafalgar Square. A mosaic



Christmas decorations at
Leadenhall Market

depicting Bacchus riding on a tiger was uncovered on this site in 1803 and can now be seen in the British Museum. Surrounding the Market, Bishopsgate and Leadenhall Street both follow the route of old Roman roads.

In 1309, permission was first granted to hold a market in the grounds of a lead-roofed manor house (the Leaden Hall) owned by Sir Hugh NEVILLE which stood on this site. The market became known for selling poultry and cheese initially, with fish, corn and meat later being added.

The lease of the building was acquired by Richard 'Dick' WHITTINGTON, former Lord Mayor of London, who gave it to the City of London in 1411. Leadenhall Market is still owned and managed by the City of London Corporation. A new market building was designed by John CROXTON in 1440. He expanded the original mansion to two stories and created a large quadrangle of buildings, complete with a public granary, massive storage rooms and a small side chapel. The meat and fish market occupied a series of courts behind the Market. It was the most important market in medieval and early modern London.

By 1600, the market included sellers of poultry, eggs, butter, cheese, grain, foodstuffs, wool, leather, and cutlery. In 1622, a cutlery monopoly was granted to Leadenhall Market. The Great Fire of 1666 destroyed much of the City of London including parts of the market but its massive masonry walls helped check the blaze.

When Leadenhall Market was rebuilt not long after, it became a covered structure for the first time and was divided into the Beef Market, the Green Yard and the Herb Market. The Beef Market was 164x80 feet with space for 100 stalls and apart from selling beef, also sold leather, raw hides and wool. The Green Yard was 170x90 feet and housed 140 stalls selling mainly lamb, mutton, veal and fish. The Herb Market measured 140x140 feet with 28 stalls selling herbs, vegetables, fruit and so on.

The medieval street plan was preserved when the Market was rebuilt in the 19th century. The current Grade II listed wrought iron and glass Market building designed by Sir Horace JONES dates back to 1881. He also designed the markets at Billingsgate and Smithfield.

During the inter-war years, the majority of the wholesale trade moved to the Poultry Market at Smithfield but other retail activities increased enormously to take its place. In the 1970s around fifty tons of poultry per week passed through the market. Most of the units were occupied by butchers, poulterers, fishmongers and grocers. The Lamb Tavern, at the centre of the market, has functioned as a public house since the market buildings were completed in the 1880s.

The archive of the Market is at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Ref: CLA/011 and includes: account books from 1678-1698 and 1725-1732; rentals from 1724; and collector's books of receipts of rents from tenants dated 1779-1825.

If you had an ancestor with a shop at Leadenhall Market, they might also have belonged to one of the Livery companies of London. There were Worshipful Companies of butchers, cutlers, fishmongers, fruiterers, grocers, leathersellers (who were particularly associated with Leadenhall Market), poulterers and woolmen, most of whose archives can be seen at LMA.

Sources:

Leadenhall Market's website: <https://leadenhallmarket.co.uk/>

Intriguing History: <https://intriguing-history.com/leadenhall-market>

PS. Pollocks Toy Museum will be showcasing some of its collection of antique puppets, toy theatres and so on at a pop-up museum and gift shop at 32-33 Leadenhall Market every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11am-4pm until Christmas.

SUICIDE IN THE FAMILY: SEARCHING FOR THE INQUEST FILES

By Colin Barratt, Member No. 4427

When we start researching our family history, we learn that our ancestors' lives follow many different directions and their manner of death likewise. A particularly sad discovery is when you find an ancestor who has taken their own life. This could lead us to investigate why they took this drastic course of action. I have two cases of suicide in my family, one on each side.

The Prison Engineer

On my mother's side, my great uncle Albert HUNT, my grandfather's younger brother, served with distinction in the Boer War and joined the prison service in 1910. He became an engineer at Parkhurst Prison, on the Isle of Wight. He was mobilised again at the outbreak of the First World War and was sent to France, but was invalided out in the first months of the war with a head injury. After the war he returned to his job at Parkhurst prison. In 1926 he took his own life in his office by gas poisoning, leaving a wife and four children. Many years ago I contacted the archives on the Isle of Wight to see if there had been anything in the local press about the incident. They found a lengthy report of the coroner's inquest in the *Isle of Wight County Press*, which they kindly photocopied and posted to me. The coroner was told that Albert suffered fits of depression, caused by the head wound sustained during the war and Albert was also very anxious about his 12 year old son, who was in hospital awaiting an operation. Albert was discovered at his desk with a coat over his head and a pipe connected to the gas bracket. A scrawled note was found on his desk, which just said "My poor little Curly". This referred to his son in hospital. The coroner's verdict was that Albert had committed suicide by poisoning himself with gas, while temporarily of unsound mind, caused by the head wound from the war and expressed sympathy to the widow and family. I recently contacted the IOW Archives again, to see if they held the original coroner's inquest papers, but I was told that these hadn't survived. So, the newspaper report is the only record I now have and I'm glad it was so detailed.

The Housewife & Mother

An even sadder event occurred in 1943 to my aunt Frances STEVENS (née BARRATT), one of my father's sisters. After a happy childhood she married a garage motor mechanic John STEVENS in 1937 and moved to a house in

East Barnet. They had three children in quick succession, Jean in 1938, Brenda in 1939 and Pamela in 1940. In 1940 John also joined the Royal Artillery as a gunner and was posted to Malaya. In early 1942 he was captured and was in a Japanese POW camp. This news was given to Frances by the Red Cross and must have been a great shock. In July 1943 she took her own life. I knew some of this many years ago but only heard the details at her sister Iris's funeral in 2006.



Frances Stevens.

Recently I ordered a digital copy of Frances' death certificate, which showed the cause of death, date of the inquest and the coroner's name. It made me wonder if the inquest documents still existed and what other information, if any, they may hold. So this started my search for the inquest file.

The Search Begins

Not having attempted to get hold of inquest documents before I Googled it and the National Archives reference stated that the majority of post mid-18th century inquest records are held at local archives, although not all coroners' inquests had been selected for permanent preservation. So I contacted the Heritage Development Officer at Barnet Borough Archives and was told that they don't hold inquest documents. It was suggested I refer to local press reports. The *Barnet Press* might have a report, but I would have to arrange a visit to the archives, as it hadn't been digitized yet.

A friend suggested I contact the Coroner's Office, as they may hold the documents. The North London Coroner's Service is based in Barnet but also covers Brent, Enfield, Haringey and Harrow. I tried there but they couldn't help. They recommended that I start with the London Metropolitan Archives.

I emailed the LMA and said that my aunt had lived in East Barnet. I was told that East Barnet was partly in Middlesex and partly Hertfordshire, so any surviving records could be either at the LMA or the Hertfordshire Record Office. I was warned that generally they only ever retained a 10% sample of coroner's inquest papers but I wasn't told how the 10% was selected. I was

asked to send the details of the person and date and they would check if there was a surviving file. The LMA couldn't find one, so advised me to contact Hertfordshire Archives, which I had already done.

The archivist at Hertfordshire Archives was very helpful. As with the LMA he asked me to give the details. He said that Barnet came under St Albans at the time, which was encouraging, as Frances' inquest was conducted by the Coroner for the St Albans District. Another warning was issued. Such records are generally restricted, owing to data protection laws. Even before they had checked whether they had the documents I was asked some questions:

- How was I related to the deceased
- Provide evidence of my identity
- Provide evidence of my relationship to the deceased
- Confirm that I understood the potentially distressing nature of the files.

Very thorough! So I told him that Frances STEVENS was my father's younger sister, I sent a scan of my driving licence, and sent copies of a paper trail to prove my relationship. This was my birth certificate, giving my father's name, the 1921 census, showing my father and Frances, Frances' wedding certificate, when she married John Stevens in 1937 and Frances' death certificate. I was also able to state that I was already aware of the circumstances of her death, which was distressing for all concerned.

A few days later he responded by saying that I was right that many inquest papers do not survive, but he could confirm that they did have the file I was seeking! A great result, but that wasn't the end of it. Such papers are not readily available for public access, and it seems that the archives team have to judge whether I would be permitted access to them and if some personal data would be redacted. More questions followed.

- The file refers not just to her death. Could I indicate if I already knew the basic details of the incident and if I knew why the inquests of others would be in the same file.
- Did I know who would have dealt with Frances' estate after her death and were they still alive.

Then I was given an unexpected piece of news. There was a suicide note in the file. I hoped that this wouldn't be redacted, as it would help me to understand her mental state.

Why others were in the file. What happened to the family?

I knew that the inquest details of others would be in the same file. The tragic details of the case are that on 19 July 1943, five days after her 27th birthday, Frances took her three little girls into their small scullery, next to the kitchen, blocked up any gaps, then turned on the gas oven and hob taps and sat down with her girls around her. All four died of carbon monoxide poisoning and the bodies were found that evening slumped in the fume-filled scullery by her sister Iris BARRATT and her nephew, 14 year old William RUSSELL. A grim and distressing discovery. I guessed that Iris would have been the one who dealt with her estate. Iris died in 2006.

Finally, this was enough for the archives team to judge that I would be able to access the whole file. It consisted of over 60 pages. They could have scanned them all for me, and emailed them, at a cost of over £60, or I could visit and photograph the documents myself, after obtaining a half day photographic permit for £5, which I chose to do.

Seeing the File

So I made an appointment to visit the archives with my wife to view the file. When the envelope of documents was brought out to us we were shown into a separate room to look at them in private, due to their sensitivity. It almost felt like I was being given some precious medieval papers. I wouldn't have been surprised if a pair of white gloves had been offered.

With over 60 pages there wasn't time to give them more than a cursory read. The main aim was to photograph all of them for later sorting and filing for detailed study. When I was first told the sad story of Frances, it was said that her husband John was missing, believed killed, in the far east, and that she was so upset at the prospect of bringing up the children alone that she decided to end all their lives. In fact, Frances knew that he had been captured the previous year and was in a Japanese POW camp.

It was surprising to me that the inquest went into so much detailed investigation, considering this was in the middle of WW2. There were witness statements from family members, neighbours, police and doctors. The scrap of paper used to write her suicide note was also preserved in a plastic sleeve. This helped to show her state of mind at the time. Fortunately, all the handwritten statements also had typed transcriptions. Frances was very depressed over her own health and that of her children, all of whom had

developed whooping cough. She thought she was dying and that her children were likely to die also, although her sister, neighbour and doctor had assured her that none of them had a life-threatening illness. She was also worried about the fate of her husband in a Japanese POW camp. It was sad and rather chilling to read in her note that her “three sweet babies were all willing to go to heaven with me”.

The verdict of the jury was that Frances murdered her three children during a period of severe depression and took her own life whilst the state of her mind was unbalanced. The verdict written on the front page of each of the children’s inquest documents was simply “murder”. Of course, this was true but it was a shock to see it written down so starkly. It was tragic that she prevented her three little daughters from fulfilling their lives and deprived her husband, and her parents, (my grandparents), from seeing the girls grow up. Frances’ husband John did survive the Japanese POW camp and returned home in 1946. He lived on until 1983.



Pamela, Brenda and Jean Stevens.

Press Reports

I thought this was such a tragic and sad case that it was sure to be reported in the local newspapers. A friend has a subscription for the British Newspaper Archive and before I began my search I asked him if there was anything about this case in any of them. Our local papers in Enfield, Barnet and Hertfordshire haven’t been digitized yet but to my surprise he found a short report in the *Birmingham Mail*, published the day after Frances’ death! When I visited the Hertfordshire Archives to view the inquest file I also checked the *Hertfordshire Advertiser* on microfilm but there was no report there.

As suggested earlier by Hugh Petrie, the Heritage Officer at Barnet Archives, the *Barnet Press* might have a report and a few months later I visited the

archives and Hugh helpfully checked the appropriate dates for me on the microfilm reader and we discovered that the death had been reported, as had the inquest details a week later. Although I had seen and read all the inquest papers, what these don't tell you is what was said at the inquest. Extracts of the suicide note were read out by the coroner, described as "a pathetic letter" in the newspaper report. These were: "I am taking the children with me. How I got what I have I don't know, but I could not stand another night of it...I am sorry to have caused bother lately, but I am not frightened now...I must say goodbye to this world. I would never have stopped so long had I known. Hope everyone is alright. Love to everyone and pray for us".

The jury and the coroner expressed their sympathy with the relatives.

Remembering Frances

My father must have been affected by the loss of his sister in these terrible circumstances, but I never knew any of this. I was born almost exactly five years afterwards and I was given the middle name Francis, which I now realise was in memory of my aunt. As a child, and even into adulthood, I disliked the name, and was embarrassed by it, as I didn't think it was a name for a boy. Now I know the story, I'm proud to have it, as it's a memorial to the aunt I never knew.

I've always believed that family history is for sharing but on my paternal side all my cousins, and their parents, have now died, so I'm the last survivor and the only one left who knows this story. Any descendants of my cousins would probably not be interested in this event from 80 years ago but I still think the search for information was worthwhile and it was important to preserve the records and hold them for the family.

It would be interesting to know if anyone else has gone through a similar search for inquest files and whether it was as challenging as mine.

P.S. Two years ago, after having my DNA analysed, I emailed two family members I didn't know of until then but who were matched quite closely to me: cousins once and twice removed. They are both descended from Frances' sister. Soon after I wrote this article I contacted them again, to see if they would be interested in her tragic story. They both were, very much so, and I sent the details to them. I'm glad I was proved wrong in my conclusion that any descendants of my cousins would not be interested in this event. Hopefully, it will be known more widely in the family now.

WIKITREE CHALLENGE

WikiTree is a genealogy website that allows users to research and to contribute to their own family trees while building and collaborating on a singular worldwide family tree within the same system. They contacted us in late July with an offer to take part in their 2023 Challenge. They wanted us to supply seven historic brick walls from our area and they proposed finding everything they could about these people in a week. For them, it challenged their researchers to work in archives related to London and for us, it was free publicity and free research – a win-win situation!

The dates they suggested for the Challenge were within a few weeks, which was the most tricky bit for us, as we had to find research subjects without the benefit of being able to ask our membership. In the end, we used two people suggested by the Executive Committee and another four which had been sent in as ‘Help’ queries to our journal but had proved difficult to find:

1. Mary JENKINS was apparently born about 1820 in Bermondsey and married George DOMMETT, who lived in the City of London and then William BICKERS, who lived in Shoreditch, but who were her parents and when and where did she marry these men?
2. Sydney DYER was born in 1812, in Kennington according to the census returns, and died in 1901 but who were his parents?
3. Thomas CHAMBERS married Minnie LOWE née PETTIFER in 1912 in Paddington but where were his birth details, which were expected to be in 1869 or 1870.
4. William WHITE, a chemist who had premises on the Haymarket from 1812, was apparently born in Middlesex, but where?
5. Edward HUGHES married Alice Charlotte JONES at Clerkenwell in 1806 but who were their parents?
6. Thomas ANKRETT was apparently born in 1765 in St Giles in the Fields but no baptism details of him or the names of his parents can be found.

There was a big reveal online on 30 August, where the WikiTree researchers shared all that they had found, and it was most interesting! There had been over 70 people helping with the research altogether. Here are some snippets of their findings but you can read the full story on WikiTree by searching for the person’s name here: <https://www.wikitree.com/>

1. It seems that Mary JENKINS had not actually married either of her 'husbands' and the first one, George DOMMETT (a soap maker) had been imprisoned for soap tax evasion.
2. Sydney DYER's case was cracked using a witness from his wedding: Emma DYER, who turned out to be his sister. She married a cheesemonger of Clerkenwell called Richard AXTENS. Two of their children died at what turned out to be their grandfather John DYER's house in Brook Street.
3. It transpired that Thomas CHAMBERS's parents were not married but both registered his birth separately. His father, Thomas PHILIPS, registered him as Thomas PHILLIPS; his mother, Sarah Ann JONES registered him as Thomas Phillips CHAMBERS. He was actually born at 22 Craven Terrace in Paddington on 2 April 1868 and CHAMBERS was the surname of his father's older sister.
4. William WHITE proved tricky but possibly was the son of Thomas WHITE of Hastings. The WikiTree researcher did find that there are some of his chemist pots in the British Museum's catalogue.
5. Edward HUGHES and Alice Charlotte JONES were also tricky but the WikiTree researcher put a well-researched case together that they were not the couple buried in Mile End New Town Independent burial ground, as had been reported.
6. Thomas ANKRETT appears to have been baptised in 1758 to Arthur and Martha ANKRETT in Shropshire.

The WikiTree Challenge proved to be a very interesting experience. Their researchers were looking for all sorts of information about the people we suggested and perhaps the most intriguing thing they discovered was that Sydney DYER and William WHITE were actually distantly related!



Have You Changed Your Email Address?

Please make sure you let Sylvia know by emailing your new address to:

membership@lwmfhs.org

SOME MINI-REPORTS SHOWING WHAT ELSE WE HAVE BEEN DOING THIS YEAR

Website

For several months now a small team has been working on developing a new website for the Society, the result can be seen at www.lwmfhs.org
We hope you enjoy.

Surname Index

It has been an ambition of the Projects Team for several years to provide members with an index of surnames found within Society documents. This ambition has been realised and a searchable Surname Index can be found within the Members Area of our website. This evolving database currently contains surnames in *Metropolitan* from October 2006 to December 2022 and our republished Monumental Inscription books. The plan is to add more items very soon.

Elaine Tyler, Projects Co-ordinator, projects@lwmfhs.org

Surname Interests

The society continues to publish our members' surname interests within the journal, in the traditional way. I also list them on our website.

The Family History Federation now has a Surname search on its Home Page. I upload our surnames to this which gives them greater exposure. Members' names and addresses have not been given to the Federation.

Barbara Haswell, Surname Interests, surnames@lwmfhs.org

Membership Report

The Society's year ended with a membership totalling 536 but we are still waiting for 135 members to renew, so currently have 401 members. Thank you to those members who renew promptly and/or setup standing orders, it helps enormously.

Sylvia Thompson, Membership Secretary, membership@lwmfhs.org

Parish Guides

In the Society's year ending 30 September 2023 we have brought out a further six Parish Guides, which are those to Edgware, Friern Barnet, Monken Hadley, St Luke Old Street, St Paul Covent Garden and Wembley. We have now completed Parish Guides for 37 of our Ancient Parishes and only have four more to do, which are Ickenham (published in November), St

Mary le Strand, Chipping Barnet and Harrow on the Hill – these last three will be published in 2024. This year we sold 311 booklets. A second edition for Clerkenwell has been brought out, which has updated information and contains much larger sections about the Middlesex Sessions and the three Clerkenwell prisons.

Elizabeth Burling, Editor, editors@lwmfhs.org

Events Report

Things are nearly back to normal and we have attended several live events over the past year. We started the year attending the virtual East Surrey Virtual Family History Show on 28 January. Next was another virtual event, The Family History Show, on 18 February. For the first time we had a stall for two days, 10 and 11 June, at Barnet Medieval Festival. It was very hot but a great event to connect with people and other organisations that share a passion for history. The Family History Show at Kempton Park Racecourse was the next live event, on 2 September, where we had very many visitors and were ably assisted by five members. On 7 October 7 we were at the Haringey History Fair at Bruce Castle, which was delayed from earlier in the year. On 4 November we attended (West) Surrey Family History Show. We finished the year's events with the virtual Family History Federation Really Useful Family History Show on 17 and 18 November.

We have a similar schedule next year, starting with the East Surrey Virtual Family History Fare in January and The Family History Show at Cambridge on 20 April 2024.

Any volunteers would be very welcome to join our happy group!

Karen de Bruyne, Events Co-ordinator, events@lwmfhs.org

Monumental Inscriptions Booklets

Work on our Monumental Inscription booklets in the last year has not picked up as hoped. However: On-site checking of the Upper Churchyard and the Church interior of Harrow on the Hill is complete. Thank you, April and Sylv.

On-site checking of St Mark's Church, Barnet Vale continues. Thank you, Celia and Clare. On-site checking of the Churchyard of St James, Friern Barnet continues. Thank you, Elizabeth.

Last but not least a big thank you to Alison for continuing to retype Monumental Inscriptions for us on a regular basis.

The number of Monumental Inscription books published so far remains at 5.

Elaine Tyler, Projects Co-ordinator, projects@lwmfhs.org

BRANCH REPORTS

Barnet Branch Report

We have had some interesting meetings this year with a couple of talks given but mostly it is a members' gathering to discuss research and ask for help. Unfortunately, attendance is not great, with generally the same loyal members turning up. The cost of hall hire has recently increased and this is one factor that is putting future meetings in doubt. I have decided to stand down from co-ordinating this branch but if someone else wishes to offer their services then please make yourself known to the committee. Perhaps we would do better with a couple of meetings a year in a local pub where we can catch up and discuss our research and listen to stories in a friendly environment.

Clare Pollitt, Barnet Branch Co-ordinator, barnetbranch@lwmfhs.org

Rayners Lane Branch Report

Members have enjoyed some excellent talks over the past year, as well as using family history videos for members' afternoons as a basis for some interesting discussions. I will be standing down from running the Rayners Lane Branch at the end of the year.

Tricia Sutton, Rayners Lane Branch Co-ordinator,
raynerslanebranch@lwmfhs.org

Virtual Branch Report

The monthly Zoom talks and replays continue to be very well attended. We have had some fascinating topics over the past year and will continue to try to recruit the most appropriate speakers and talks for our audience. It is great to see our overseas members benefitting from these. If you haven't yet been part of the Zoom audience, please contact the team and we will add you to our list.

We are looking to add another person to our team. Clare has been booking our speakers for some time now and feels it is time for someone else to take up the reins. Talks are booked up to next April. If you are interested in doing this or would just like more information, please contact the team.

Clare, Elizabeth, Sylvia & Elaine, The Virtual Branch Team
virtualbranch@lwmfhs.org

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook Report

Our Facebook page is growing, with followers up to 2,955. This main page aims to be an informative and fun place where local London or family history anniversaries are mentioned and linked archives showcased. We also put notice of our branch meetings here and promote our booklets. Our most popular post recently was one about WH Smith, which was seen by over 90,000 people. The Help and Discussion group is a private place where people can post their family history queries and interact with other historians on matters relating to London, Westminster and Middlesex. Membership of this has gone up to 3,100 this year. Anyone reading this will know how complicated Greater London history can be and we aim to point people to our fellow family history societies when queries relate to their areas.

Any member who is on Facebook is, of course, welcome to join in.

Elizabeth Burling, <https://www.facebook.com/LWMFHS>

X (Twitter) Report

Our Twitter account now has 311 followers, up 170 on last year. We use the account to promote events both virtual and in person, encouraging membership and sales of Parish Guides etc. We also support other societies and organisations with family history and/or local history links.

Karen de Bruyne, <https://twitter.com/LWMFHS>



OBITUARY

It is with sadness that we report the death of the following member of the Society. We send condolences to her family and friends.

Mrs Elisabeth Roller Membership number 7822

Elisabeth died on 6 September 2023.

Elisabeth was a long-standing member and so enthusiastic about her family history and our Society. She was a regular contributor to *Metropolitan*, writing articles and letters, and asking for assistance in the *Help!* section.

JOTTINGS

Out and About

We attended the Family History Fair at Kempton Park on 2 September and it was a very successful event. There was a strong showing by the London Family history societies with East of London just opposite us, West Middlesex down the aisle one way, West Surrey down the aisle the other and East Surrey behind us. This makes it much easier for people with London ancestors and there was quite a bit of traffic between us all. The Fair was much busier than last year and it was great to meet some of our members there, to gather some new ones (welcome!) and to give as much help as we could to members of the public. Our Parish Guides proved quite popular with St Pancras topping the bill and, unusually for a London-wide event, Edmonton also selling well. Thanks go to the team of Elizabeth, Graham, Karen, Robert and Shirley, who were fuelled by Shirley's delicious cakes.

On 7 October we went to the rescheduled Haringey History Fair at Bruce Castle. It was great to chat to members of the public as well as the people at Hornsey Historical Society and Edmonton Hundred Historical Society. Our second-hand books were especially in demand here, together with our local Haringey Parish Guides (Hornsey and Tottenham). Thanks to the team, who this time were Elaine (with her endless supply of hot drinks!), Elizabeth and Karen.

The West Surrey FHS Fair (the first since 2019) took place on 4 November at Woking and we had a stand there too. Several of our members popped by and said hello, which was lovely! Our Alan Godfrey maps sold well, as did our booklets with the top three being our MI booklet of St James Hampstead Road (the one dug up for HS2 near Euston) and our Parish Guides to Paddington and St Martin-in-the-Fields. Five of the Greater London Family History Societies were there, which meant that if your family had popped over the border into another area, you only had to walk a few steps to find the experts. Thanks to Elizabeth, Graham and Shirley for manning the stall.



Elizabeth and Karen on our stand at Haringey Local History Fair.

Catholic Family History Society to close

We were very sorry to hear that this Society is set to close at the end of this year following a unanimous vote at their AGM. They were the specialist group for those researching Roman Catholic ancestors and had been active for over 40 years. We hope that their useful database of Catholic ancestors who were buried in Anglican churchyards (which were often the only place available before municipal cemeteries opened) will be preserved somewhere. At the moment, it can still be downloaded from their website: <http://catholicfhs.online/index.php>

Ghost Signs

Ghost signs are old hand-painted advertising signs, often painted directly onto the brickwork, which are preserved on buildings that have usually since changed their identity. These are more often found in urban districts and there must be thousands in our LWMFHS area. They are an important part of the historic fabric on our high streets and can tell us much about our cultural and social history. If your family had a business at a particular location, it is possible that there may be a ghost sign from their time there. Historic England is collecting photos of these signs, which you can upload onto a map showing their location. Of course, this map and its images can also be searched by anyone to see what is still there in an area. Even if you are not interested in ghost signs, the map can be very useful as each building is numbered or named, if you zoom in close enough.

For more information or to upload pictures, visit the website here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/features/ghost-signs/>

Barnet Museum Online Archive

In August, the Museum launched a collection of its journals, bulletins and research papers as a free resource on a section of its website. They hope that this will enable more people to read, to research, or simply to enjoy engaging with their local history. The collection includes the museum's annual *History Journal* which aims to bring together a wealth of knowledge from the community about local people and events. Currently you can see these from 2017-2022. Also here are the Barnet & District Local History Society *Bulletins* from 1949-2006, which include subjects such as 'The Hadley Parish Poor House' and 'How Barnet got its Railways'. The research papers date from 2020 and include 'A History of Greenhill Gardens' which was once a mansion and is now a local park. You can access these items here: <https://www.barnetmuseum.co.uk/our-archive-online.html>

St Paul's Cathedral Library

The Library was completed in 1709 at Triforium level behind the south-west tower of St Paul's. Since then nothing much has happened to it, although electric light was installed in 1902 with a heating system soon afterwards and the contents of the shelves went to Wales for safe keeping during the Second World War. It has now reopened following a five year restoration project during which 10,000 books and manuscripts have been moved away, cleaned, recorded and brought back on-site. The walls have been painted, an updated lighting system has been installed and there are new desks for readers amongst other changes.

The collection was almost completely destroyed during the Great Fire of 1666 but restocked from various sources and now contains texts from 1313 onwards. Most of the books are concerned with theology and church history. Members of the public can visit the Library through booking the Triforium tour of the Cathedral or by making an appointment to access the collections.

Trent Park House

As this house is being turned into flats, a portion of it will become a museum which reflects the house's history. Visitors will be able to visit Sir Philip SASSOON's restored and furnished rooms to the basement rooms which housed the clandestine operation against thousands of highly prized Axis prisoners of war, including some of Hitler's top military commanders. Trent Park is recognised by Historic England as being of national and international significance on a level with Bletchley Park. Their volunteer group of researchers have been hosting monthly online meetings sharing their findings regarding Trent Park's history. They are also looking to document early memories of the house from before 1950. For more information, visit: <https://www.trentparkhouse.org.uk/>

Ruislip Lido and Strictly Come Dancing

Strictly Come Dancing fans may have recognised Ruislip Lido on Week 2 of the show, when former Coronation Street actress Ellie Leach and professional dancer Vito Coppola practised their dance there.

The Lido has its origins in a 60 acre reservoir which was built as a feeder to the Grand Junction Canal and also in order to provide drinking water to the people of Paddington in 1811. Unfortunately it was not successful at either task and was converted into a lido in the late 1930s. There is a website dedicated to Ruislip Lido and its history, which contains postcards, an old brochure and more at: <https://www.ruislipreservoir.co.uk/>

LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 8 February 2024

7.00pm-7.45pm

Online

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Members of the Society will be held at 7pm on Thursday 8 February 2024 online via Zoom.

We expect the AGM to take half an hour or so and do hope that members will come to this as well as staying online to attend our usual Virtual Branch talk, which takes place afterwards.

For those who have not attended an AGM before, the Committee does hope that you will take this chance to ‘come along’ and see what it is all about. It is your opportunity to question the members of the Committee concerning any aspect of the Society. The Minutes of the last AGM were published in March’s *Metropolitan* (this is also available as an e-journal in the members’ section of our website) and you may wish to comment on them. You’ll also need this December’s *Metropolitan* with you so that you can access the reports in this AGM insert.

Zoom ‘doors’ will open at 6.45pm for a 7pm start. After a welcome from our President, Michael Gandy, our meeting will run like this:

AGENDA

- Chairman’s Report – please read the report on page 29. If you have any questions about anything Elizabeth has said, you are welcome to raise these at this time.

- Treasurer's Report – April's report is on page 31. Again, if you have any queries you can ask them now.
- The Annual Accounts for 2022-2023. These are published on pages 32 and 33.
- The Election of the Officers of the Society. All of our Officers (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) are volunteers who are elected for one year. Any member can stand for election for any of these posts and if you would like to do this, please fill in the form on pages vii and viii and return it to the Secretary by 23 January 2024 (see below). If you would like details of what any particular role entails, please contact the Secretary, which can be done online here: secretary@lwmfhs.org
- The Appointment of other members of the Executive Committee: these are the Membership Secretary, Journal Editors, Surname Interests Co-ordinator, Projects Co-ordinator, Events Co-ordinator, Postal Sales and Branch Representatives.
- Any Other Business. Anything else you would like to ask the Society about – it would be helpful if you could notify the Secretary by 23 January 2024 (by email to secretary@lwmfhs.org or using the form on page 35) so that if necessary the answer can be researched fully in time for the meeting.

The Business of the AGM will then be finished. There should be time for a short break before our talk.

Our Virtual Branch meeting will take place as usual at 8pm. The talk on this occasion will be *The Notorious Fraudster Ford: Researching a Criminal Ancestor* by LWMFHS member Graham Ford.

Log-in details will be emailed to you a few days before the meeting.

c/o 38 Capel Road
East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8JE

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

for the year ending 30 September 2023

This report is my first as Chairman and the very first thing I would like to do here is to thank everybody who helps to run the Society. LWMFHS is run entirely by volunteers who each use their knowledge and expertise to make sure members have the best experience possible. The Executive Committee are all multi-taskers and do a phenomenal job but I would also like to thank everybody who helps in any way whatsoever. It really is a case of 'many hands make like work' and the more the merrier.

We promote our Society at fairs and open days and this year have started branching out into events such as the Barnet Medieval Fair, which we attended in June. This year we attended events organised by our sister societies East Surrey FHS and West Surrey FHS, *The Genealogist* sponsored show at Kempton Park and the Family History Federation's online one, plus the Borough of Haringey's Local History Fair.

Our Parish Guide Series has now been going for 6 years, with a new guide based on one of our ancient parishes being produced every two months. These Guides are based on a series created by Doreen Heywood and Kay Payne in the 1990s before the internet had become a force in genealogy. Whilst many sources are now available online, a larger number are not. The National Archives, for instance, says that only about 10% of its collections have been digitised. Our little books are designed to inform readers about what is there and where to find it, whether it is online or not. Currently 38 guides have been published and a second edition of Clerkenwell has also been produced. There are only three more parishes in Middlesex and Westminster to do, plus the City of London. This will be done in wards, as many of the parishes were tiny. I would like to thank April Vesey and Barbara Haswell who have proof read every single book.

As you can see from our mini-reports on page 20, we are going to be needing some extra help with all of our meetings groups. Both Tricia Sutton and Clare Pollitt are standing down from their roles here and I would like to thank them both very much for all they have done for our Society.

For the Virtual Branch we need someone to book our speakers and liaise with them. The Family History Federation has a list of speakers and their topics to choose from and we also get recommendations and suggestions of

speakers sent in. So you would need to contact speakers and let them know of our meeting dates. We need to know that they are happy for us to record the meeting for our Friday replay. Once booked and agreed, you would then contact the speaker again about a week or two before the talk to finalise details and inform them when to expect the login details, which you would forward to them in due course.

With respect to our in-person meetings, again we need people to organise the programme, perhaps advertise locally, liaise with the halls we use and generally keep the branches running. Regarding Rayners Lane, discussions are currently being held with two people who usually attend the meetings about the possibility of one or both of them keeping the group going, which is encouraging. I do think these local live meetings work very well with a group sharing running them. At Barnet, there was a useful discussion between attendees about the future of the meetings.

It might be that members would prefer a meeting at different times of the day (several people who attended the lunch-time City Branch have asked whether it could be restarted, for instance), or on different days of the week. To this end, we are preparing a short survey which will be emailed to members in due course, I would very much appreciate your comments. If you are not on the internet you can write in enclosing a SSAE for a postal copy.

On a happier note, I am delighted that our new website is up and running. It looks bang up to date and presents information about our Society and the part of North London we look after in a clear and logical way. The front page looks inviting and has easy-to-use links to our area, how to join us, our shop and latest Society news. A banner at the top of the page has further links to our events, research resources, our members' area and information about us – click on any of these for a drop-down menu. More resources will be added in due course and our members' area will have exclusive records not available anywhere else. I would like to thank Peter Walker for his many years as webmaster for the Society and Elaine Tyler and Sylvia Thompson for all their hard work on the new website.

Elizabeth Burling, Chairman

DRAFT TREASURER'S REPORT **for the year 1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023**

As previously notified to members, we closed our HSBC account on 28 November 2022 and transferred all our banking to Santander. This transition has been successful and allows for online banking which has benefitted the Society and made payments and receipts more straightforward. Santander does not charge us anything for having an account with them, but there is a small residue of HSBC bank charges for this year.

Administration costs are up because they include software and website costs and there has been a lot of work to set up a new – refreshed and updated – website for the Society, alongside maintaining the old one for now. Although this has involved some extra cost in the short term, it is worth noting that this new website has only been possible because of the unpaid time dedicated to this by the Executive Committee, in particular a small project team of Committee members assisted by a volunteer with extensive experience and skills.

In a similar way, we have sought to update other aspects of our work by adding to our equipment, such as a tablet and a power pack for use at family history fairs; also a scanner and projector. Such purchases have improved the way we work but are also the reason that equipment and depreciation costs are higher this year.

Many other costs have increased due to general inflation, such as the monthly storage charge, printing and postage. Participation in family history fairs has increased, so our expenditure on them has increased accordingly.

I have made a small accounting change – the Annual General Meeting (AGM) has previously been accounted for separately because we used to have “physical” meetings involving room hire and other costs. Since Covid changed all that and we moved online using Zoom, the AGM incurs no extra costs - unless we have to pay for a speaker, but this is no different to the normal monthly members meetings. Therefore we now have one category of expenditure to cover branch meetings and the AGM.

Overall, we have spent more and earned a little less this year. Therefore we have a very small deficit. This is not a problem, it was having healthy reserves that has allowed us to update things.

April Vesey, Treasurer

LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Draft profit and loss account for the year ended 30 September 2023

	30.9.23	30.9.22
Income:		
Subscriptions	£7,261.84	£7,573.08
Sales of Parish Guides and MIs	£1,937.33	£2,550.88
Donations	£91.28	£49.98
Miscellaneous & help with research	£6.00	£47.80
Interest received	£0.00	£4.07
Maps, postcards & books	£140.74	£109.98
	£9,437.19	£10,335.79
Expenditure:		
Metropolitan Journal	-£3,514.30	-£3,264.90
Branch meeting costs and AGM	-£1,370.69	-£1,213.24
FFHS Membership	-£173.28	-£186.58
Books, maps etc	-£115.50	£0.00
Fairs and open days	-£259.00	-£193.50
Administration & general expenses	-£823.40	-£374.36
Printing of Parish Guides and MIs	-£1,452.87	-£1,756.86
Storage	-£840.00	-£662.35
Equipment	-£641.92	-£111.97
Bank charges	-£11.20	-£68.12
Deprecation	-£268.20	-£125.90
	-£9,470.36	-£7,957.78
Net Deficit/Surplus	<u>-£33.17</u>	<u>£2,378.01</u>

LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Draft Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2023

	30.09.23	30.09.22
Fixed Assets		
Equipment	£595.30	£213.58
Current Assets		
Stock of publications	£2,050.88	£2,741.68
Prepaid expenses	£1,131.78	£1,087.68
Cash and bank balances	<u>£24,284.95</u>	<u>£24,375.56</u>
Total assets	<u>£28,062.91</u>	<u>£28,418.50</u>
Current Liabilities		
Subscriptions in Advance	-£2,007.28	-£2,324.50
Creditors & Accrued Expenses	-£70.20	-£75.40
	<u>-£2,077.48</u>	<u>-£2,399.90</u>
	£ <u>£25,985.43</u>	<u>£26,018.60</u>
Financed by:		
Balance Brought Forward	£26,018.60	23,640.59
Net Deficit/Surplus for Year	<u>-£33.17</u>	<u>2,378.01</u>
Members' Net Funds	£ <u>£25,985.43</u>	<u>26,018.60</u>

LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

**Annual General Meeting
to be held on
Thursday 8 February 2024**

Nomination Form for Election of Officers

Position: CHAIRMAN

Nominee:..... Mem No.....

Proposed by:.....

Signature..... Mem No.....

Seconded by:.....

Signature..... Mem No.....

Date..... Agreed by Nominee.....

Position: HON. SECRETARY

Nominee:..... Mem No.....

Proposed by:.....

Signature..... Mem No.....

Seconded by:.....

Signature..... Mem No.....

Date..... Agreed by Nominee.....

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

Position: HON. TREASURER

Nominee:..... Mem No.....

Proposed by:.....

Signature..... Mem No.....

Seconded by:.....

Signature..... Mem No.....

Date..... Agreed by Nominee.....

Any Other Business

I wish to raise the following matter under Any Other Business

.....
.....
.....
.....

Name:..... Mem No.....

Signature..... Date.....

Please return this form to: Hon Secretary LWMFHS
by email to: secretary@lwmfhs.org
or by post c/o 38 Capel Road, East Barnet, Herts EN4 8JE
To be received no later than Thursday 23 January 2024.

BEGINNERS' CORNER

If an ancestor wrote a Will stating what they wanted to happen with their estate (that is their money, property and possessions) after their death, the Will would usually need to go through probate. Probate is commonly known as 'proving' the Will and has to be done in order to give the executors the legal right to deal with the estate. If the deceased had not left a Will, there will be 'letters of administration' to determine what happened to their estate.

The first thing to know is that Wills are split into two groups: those proved before 1858 and those proved after that date. We are going to start with the later Wills because these are much less complicated and easier to find.

Wills proved after 1858

After 1858, there was a centralised civil system for proving Wills, so there is only one place to look for them. They were proved in the Principal Probate Registry in Holborn or at one of the eleven District Probate Registries, with copies of these Wills being forwarded to the Principal Probate Registry. New records appear online about a fortnight after probate has been issued. Indexes (known as Calendars) from 1858 up to date for England and Wales can be searched for free online. You need to know the person's name and year of death, ideally. Copies of Wills and grants of representation (which legally prove the authority of the executors) from 1858-1966 can usually be ordered online for £1.50. This is a beta service and a bit clunky but can be found here: <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/>

The Calendars from 1858-1943 can be seen on microfiche at The National Archives, ones from 1858-1966 are available at Guildhall Library and the Society of Genealogists and these, plus those for 1973-1995, are online on Ancestry UK.

Wills proved before 1858

Before 1858, Wills were dealt with by church courts, the particular court being determined by where the person died together with the value and the geographical distribution of the goods left in the Will. As you can no doubt tell, this is not necessarily straightforward!

The senior court for Probate jurisdiction in Middlesex at this time was the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (often known as PCC). The archive contains

registered copies of the original probates written into volumes by clerks at the church courts. Information found in these includes the name and address of the person whose Will it is, the name of the executor who will be responsible for carrying out their wishes, the date of the Will and its witnesses and, hopefully, the beneficiaries. Wills proved here, dating from 1384-1858 are at The National Archives (TNA) and searchable for free online at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>. You can then download one immediately from TNA for £3.50 or, if you register for an account and sign in, for free.

Some PCC Wills and related material have been digitised onto Ancestry UK. These are Wills dated 1383-1629, 1653-1660, 1671-1675 and 1686-1700, Administrations dated 1581-1619 and 1649-1660, Wills and Administrations dated 1396-1577 and 1640-1650, and a Calendar of Wills and Administration dated 1520-1670. The Genealogist website also has a collection of PCC Wills dated 1384-1858.

An index to the PCC Wills (1383-1558), originally published in 1893, is online for free here: <https://archive.org/details/indexofwillsprov10chur>

Hard copy indexes to later Wills have been produced by The Friends of The National Archives (1701-1749) and the Society of Genealogists (1750-1800) - this last is online on Findmypast.

(For those looking for ancestors up north, a similar court, the Prerogative Court of York (PCY) covered the counties of Cheshire, Cumberland, Durham, the Isle of Man, Lancashire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Westmoreland, and Yorkshire. These Wills are held at the Borthwick Institute in York. However, in this article we are concentrating on Wills for people who lived in the area covered by LWMFHS.)

Whilst it is always worth having a look at the PCC Wills, there are quite a few other places where London ancestors' Wills may have been proved.

The next most senior court in Middlesex was the Consistory Court of the Bishop of London, which had jurisdiction over the whole Diocese of London apart from those parishes which had 'a peculiar jurisdiction' (see below). Original Wills and administrations dating from 1507-1858 (with gaps) and associated records are at London Metropolitan Archives, Ref: DL/C and online at Ancestry UK.

Other associated records are at LMA but have not been digitised, so if you find an ancestor's Will in this collection, contact LMA to see what else they have.

Although the Bishop of London looked after London as a whole, smaller areas were administered by his deputies. These areas are known as the Commissary Courts.

The Commissary Court of London (London Division) had jurisdiction over various parishes including these from our area: Bloomsbury, City of London (part), Edgware, Edmonton, Enfield, Finchley, Greenford, Monken Hadley, Hampstead, Harefield, Hendon, Hornsey, Ickenham, Islington, Kingsbury, Marylebone, Northolt, Paddington, Ruislip, St Giles-in-the-Fields, South Mimms, Stanmore and Tottenham. Once again, the Wills (1523-1857) are at LMA and online at Ancestry UK. Those from 1750-1857 are also on Family Search and indexes of associated records are on Findmypast (FMP).

The Archdeaconry Court of London had jurisdiction over part of the City of London, St Andrew Holborn with St George the Martyr, St James Clerkenwell and St John Clerkenwell from our area. Originals Wills dated 1524-1807 (with gaps) are at LMA, Ref: DL/AL/C and online at Ancestry UK. Indexes of associated records are on FMP.

The Archdeaconry Court of Middlesex had jurisdiction over 33 parishes in Westminster and Middlesex including these from our area: St Anne's Soho, St Clement Danes, St George's Hanover Square, St James Piccadilly, St Martin-in-the-Fields, St Mary le Strand and St Paul's Covent Garden. Wills dated 1608-1611, 1662-1810 are at LMA, Ref: DL/AM/PW and online at Ancestry UK. Other associated material is at LMA but has not been digitised.

Peculiars were small areas exempt from the jurisdiction of the local bishop or archdeacon, i.e. the Bishop of London. There are three of these in our area, again, there are associated documents available too.

The Peculiar Court of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral had jurisdiction over various areas including City of London (part), Friern Barnet, St Luke Old Street, St Pancras with Highgate, Precinct of Portpool (in parish of St Andrew Holborn) and Willesden. Originals Wills dated 1660-1837 are at LMA, Ref: CLC/313/K/C and online at Ancestry UK.

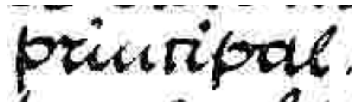
The Peculiar Court of the Deanery of the Arches of London, Croydon and Shoreham belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury and had jurisdiction over part of the City of London (which is in the Deanery of the Arches, as you might expect) but the Croydon part includes Harrow and Pinner (which you might not!). Original Wills of the Arches of London dated 1624-1777 are Lambeth Palace Library and online at FS.

The Consistory Court of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster was a peculiar which had jurisdiction over the following places, although many do not mention the parish: The Precincts of Westminster Abbey (1504-1829) St Margaret (1504-1829) St John the Evangelist, Smith Square (1728-1829) Paddington (until c1669) St Martin-in-the-Fields (until c1669) and parts of the City of London. A calendar of these records, which date from 1504-1829, was drawn up and published in 1864 and it remains the main finding aid to the collection. Most of this collection is at Westminster Archives Centre, where they are Ref: DCW; the remaining probate records are at Westminster Abbey.

There is quite a useful finding aid on FMP. The London Probate Index covers the dates 1750-1858 and has administrations of estates from nine smaller local courts: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Peculiar of the Deanery of Croydon, 1750-1780s; the Archbishop of Canterbury's Peculiar of the Deanery of the Arches, 1750-1780s; the Archdeaconry Court of London, 1750-1785; the Archdeaconry Court of Middlesex, 1750-1785; the Commissary Court of London 1750-1858; the Consistory Court of London 1750-1858; the Peculiar of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral, 1750-1837; the Royal Peculiar of St Katherine by the Tower, 1750-1772; the Royal Peculiar of the Commissary Court of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, 1750-1780s.

Reading old Wills

Reading and transcribing old Wills can be a challenge for several reasons. They were copied out by hand, often using 'secretary hand' a form of writing developed to allow scribes to write quickly. The more you look at it the easier it becomes to read so perseverance is recommended. Letter formation is fairly uniform but there are some differences from writing today, for example 'c' looks like a modern 'r' and vice versa. The word above, for example, is 'principal'.



In order to be completely clear to lawyers, Wills are usually written as one whole sentence from start to finish. You can often tell where a new sentence would start if it was a normal text as capital letters are there, although the preceding full stops are not. They are also written in technical legalese and grammar. For example, you might find 'I give, devise and bequeath' as here.

Of give, devise, and bequeath.

We would normally only use one of these verbs but lawyers have to cover all eventualities so may use all three. Another example is 'his, hers or their heir or heirs' and 'any part or parts thereof'.

Wills also have their own set phrases and special vocabulary. They often start with 'In the Name of God Amen' or 'This is the Last Will and Testament of me'. 'Hereditament' means something that can be inherited, which could be physical items such as land or a building, or other things such as rent from property. 'Appurtenances' are rights or privileges belonging to a principal property, such as a garden.

It can be very useful to work out a will one line at a time, leaving out any especially tricky words. As you work your way through the texts, it will become easier to decipher and you can go back and have another look at words you have left out.

There are many online resources to help you, such as these from the Society of Genealogists: <https://www.sog.org.uk/education/hints-tips/palaeography-part-1/>

Inland Revenue Death Duty

Inland Revenue Death Duty was introduced in 1796, although initially this only applied to personal estates valued at £20 or more. The Death Duty registers are split into two types: those of the PCC and those of all the other courts (known as the country courts).

PCC death duty registers are at TNA in series PROB 11 and have not been digitised, however all the PCC Wills from 1383-1858 have been.

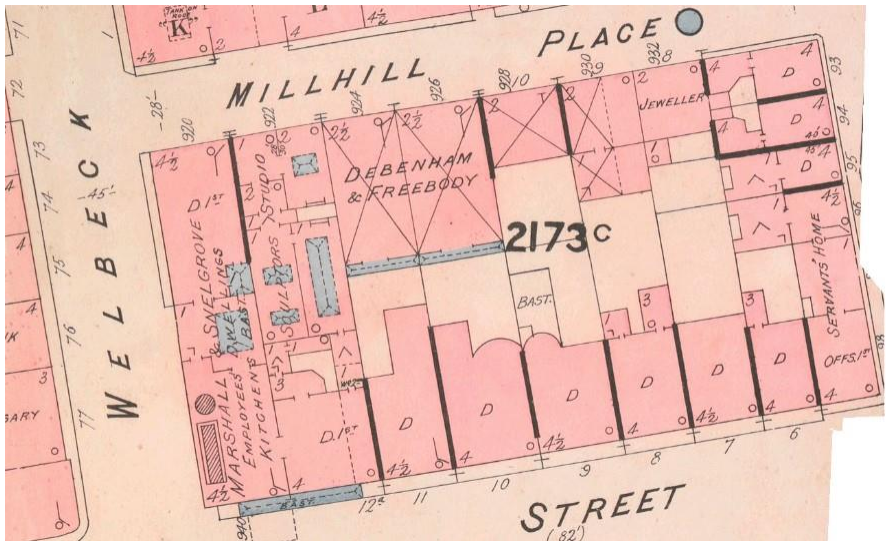
The country court death duty registers are at TNA in series IR 26. Some of these have been digitised and can be seen online. Those dating from 1796-1811 can be searched on TNA's website and can be purchased from there. Those dating from 1796-1858 were digitised by FS and can be seen at their Family History Centres and affiliated libraries. Those dating after 1858 have not been digitised and you will need to visit TNA to see these. They are stored off-site so must be ordered in advance.

WEBSITE NEWS

Goad Fire Insurance Plans

The British Library hold the fire insurance plans dating back to 1885 which were produced by London-based firm Charles E Goad Ltd. These maps were originally produced to help insurance companies assess fire risks. They are a primary source of material which are particularly useful as they give information about the function of each building, its footprint, the number of floors, construction materials and more.

The main maps have businesses numbered and supplemental small map snippets contain all the details. Names of individual businesses and their addresses are often also recorded. For example, see this attached snippet of part of Debenham and Freebody, Silk Mercer's premises off Welbeck Street in Marylebone. The map also shows employees' dwellings belonging to Marshall and Snellgrove, a sculptor's studio, a jeweller and many private dwellings.



These fascinating maps are available for the whole of the UK and they can be easily found online using Wikimedia Commons at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Goad_fire_insurance_maps_of_the_UK

NINETEEN FORTY FIVE

By Dennis Galvin, Member No. 1046

I suppose we family historians are a bit different to everyone else as we are always wondering where, why and when.

One of the things that always intrigued me was Wembley Stadium: why is it where it is? I discovered recently that it was a Manchester man who eventually became a director of the Great Western Railway Board and he thought Wembley would be great place for a very big tower just like Blackpool and Paris and in fact made plans and indeed even half built a tower until the money ran out!

My special interest for this piece starts in 1945 at the end of WW2. I had not been to school for three and a half years as my Hackney infants' school was taken over by the Fire & Rescue. All their very busy vehicles covered the playground. I moved up to my London County Council Secondary Modern School whilst the war was still raging but once hostilities ended we attended in the mornings and went home at lunch time. The local girls school took over in the afternoon whilst their school was being repaired from the bombing.

Once victory had been announced all sorts of things happened! I can remember that we were told to bring an empty tin to school as the Canadian Government had sent all the London Secondary Schools large tubs of drinking chocolate powder. We all duly scooped up a full tin of powder! Oh dear!! By the time we had arrived home our tins had been duly cleaned right out, our hands, faces and shirts were a sight to behold!

We were also taken out every Wednesday to somewhere in London. I can remember Sadlers Wells, Hackney Central Hall where we saw a George Bernard SHAW play, *Stacy's Printers*, where they gave us football programs for the Charlton versus Newcastle United match for that weekend. We also went to the Beckton Gasworks where they laid on a never to be forgotten. drink of orange juice and cream bun! One special treat was quite a surprise, Secondary Schools from all over the London were taken by train to Wembley Station where a special event was put on, a bit of everything Wembley did, some athletics, dog racing, speedway racing and of course football. I could not know then that one day I would be back to play on the famous turf - the

first football match to ever be played under floodlights at the famous stadium.

One Monday morning we were given special instructions to look our best (not easy in our patched up clothes!) as there was going to be a special presentation. The following morning we were all presented with a very colourful certificate with a facsimile signature by H.M. the King, which of course said sorry for all we went through over those WW2 years. We were told to write our names on the back - all the class inkwells were duly filled for such an important occasion!

I am pleased to say I still have my certificate.

Addendum: According to the book *Hackney at War* by Jennifer Golden (The History Press, 2009) on 16 September 1940 one of our own AA (Anti Aircraft) shells fell on my Secondary School but did not explode! This would have been taken away and exploded on Hackney Marshes, but it could have taken out quite a few classrooms plus a lot of glass! This meant older children could join us playing in the bombed houses and in a shot-down enemy Messerschmitt fighter plane!



ADVERTISING RATES

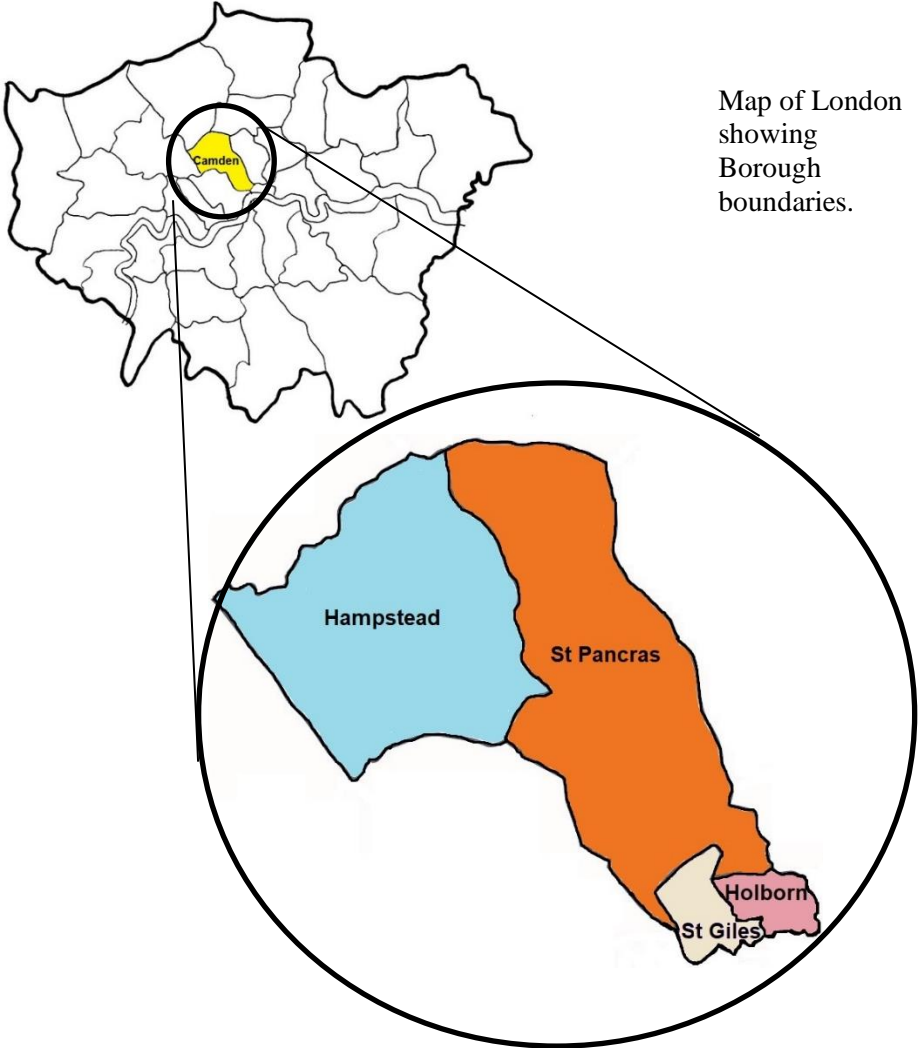
Advertising rates per issue of *Metropolitan* are as follows:

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Half Page £23
Quarter Page £14
Eighth Page, £8.50

All copy, correspondence and remittances should be sent to the Editors.
See inside front cover for address.

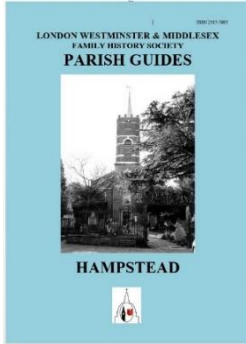
ANCESTORS IN WHAT IS NOW THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

Before 1965 this area was divided into three Metropolitan Boroughs: Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras. However, since Tudor times until 1900, this area was covered by the Ancient Parishes of Hampstead, Holborn, St Giles in the Fields and St Pancras.



Map of London showing Borough boundaries.

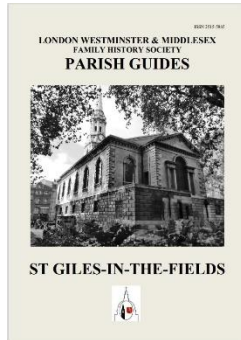
Our Parish Guides are based on these Ancient Parishes, although the information they contain goes from the earliest known records available right up to date.



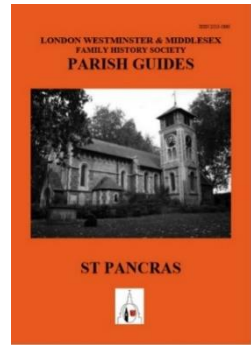
Places in **Hampstead** Ancient Parish include Belsize, parts of Chalk Farm and Child's Hill, Finchley Road, Fortune Green, Frognal, Hampstead Heath, Haverstock Hill, Kenwood, Kilburn (east of Edgware Road), North End, Rosslyn Hill, Swiss Cottage, West End and West Hampstead.

Places in **St Giles-in-the-Fields**

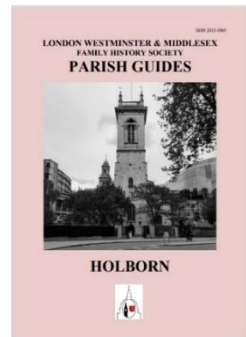
Ancient Parish include Lincoln's Inn Fields, St George Bloomsbury and Seven Dials.



Places in **Holborn** Ancient Parish include Barnard's Inn, Chancery Lane, Ely Place, Ely Rents, Gray's Inn, Hatton Garden, Lincoln's Inn, Staple Inn, Thavie's Inn and St George the Martyr.



Places in **St Pancras** Ancient Parish include Agar Town, Bedford New Town, Brookfield, Camden, Chalk Farm, Euston, Fitzrovia, Gospel Oak, Haverstock Hill, Highgate, Kentish Town, Kings Cross, Regent's Park and Somers Town.



You can buy these booklets or any of our other booklets here:

<https://www.parishchest.com/london-westminster-middlesex-fhs-4577.php>

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

By Sheila Clarke, Member No.7900

‘There’s none but has some fault; and he’s the best, Most perfect he, who’s spotted with the least.’

If, like me, you love a character, read on - here you will find some of the weird and wonderful individuals who caught my eye, diverting me from legitimate research with their eccentricities. Well known in their day they are now largely forgotten, mere footnotes in London’s history, but I decided to resurrect a few in an attempt to share a small part of our ancestors’ experience and celebrate the ‘difference’ that makes each one of us unique. All are prior to 1814, publication date of my primary source.

Anyone living in the area of Leadenhall Street would have had the dubious pleasure of hardware merchant Nathaniel BENTLEY as a neighbour. Known to all as ‘Dirty Dick,’ Nathaniel more than lived up to this nickname with both his person and shop encased in years of grime. It hadn’t always been so: we are told that ‘in his beau days’ Nathaniel was something of a dandy, frequenting the city’s pleasure gardens in his favourite suit of blue and silver, his hair dressed ‘in the extremity of fashion,’ but the death of his fiancée on their wedding day caused Nathaniel to abandon personal hygiene. Unfortunately, he treated his surroundings the same way and such was his notoriety that letters addressed to ‘The Dirty Warehouse, London’ were successfully delivered and people came from all over the country to see the squalor for themselves. In a poem of 1801 Nathaniel is first admonished:



Nathaniel Bentley.

‘... think what thy neighbours suffer by thy whim
Of keeping self and house in such a trim.....
The officers of health should view the scene,
And put thy shop and thee in quarantine’ (then cajoled,)

‘Consider thou, in Summer’s ardent heat,
 When various means are tried to cool the street,
 What must each decent neighbour suffer then
 From various vapours issuing from thy den’ (and finally flattered,)
 ‘Thou art (‘tis said) a very comely man!
 Of polished language, partial to the fair,
 Then why not wash thy face and comb thy matted hair?
 Clear from thy house accumulated dirt,
 New paint the front, and wear a cleaner shirt.’

But it was all to no avail: he continued to maintain his war against cleanliness until 1804 when the lease on his property expired. Around the corner, proprietors of the *Old Jerusalem* drinking establishment sensed a business opportunity and became *Dirty Dick’s Port Wine & Spirit House*, adopting the same laissez faire attitude as Nathaniel while adding a few choice touches of their own by hanging dead cats from a heavily cobwebbed ceiling and

strewn the floor with rat corpses. Charles DICKENS is believed to have based the character of Miss Havisham on Nathaniel, so he could be said to have inspired one of the great creations in English Literature, but I doubt his long suffering neighbours would have considered it a price worth paying.



Thomas Sugden.

Another less than fragrant character was Yorkshireman Thomas SUGDEN who frequented the area around St Paul’s Churchyard and distinguished himself by carrying a pigeon on each shoulder and one on his head. Described as ‘the dirtiest among the dirty’ Tom quickly reduced pristine birds

to the same state and showed little care for their welfare by stuffing them in his pockets. However, this putrid pigeon fancier did have one redeeming feature - any children stopping by would be treated to a lecture on the importance of obeying their parents and his regret on not receiving guidance from his own. Left to make his own way in the world he had found ‘nothing but the sea could serve his turn’ which led to him losing his sight ‘in a dreadful storm’ and forcing him into beggary. The Churchyard had long been a vibrant meeting place for protest and religious debate. It was also the

literary heart of London with its many bookshops and publishers and a thriving marketplace. How many children passing through this lively scene must have come across Tom and his birds and resolved to pay more heed to their parents on hearing his sorry tale?

In marked contrast to Nathaniel and Thomas was Ann JOHNSON, a widow known as ‘the Holborn lace weaver.’ Ann, too, was blind, as a result of ‘a spotted fever’ but always appeared ‘cleanly[sic], sober, and decent, inoffensive and honest.’ She was out in all weathers in the area of Holborn Hill, so my ATKINSON ancestors who lived at various times in nearby Dean Street, Great Turnstile and Hand Court could well have seen her as they went about their daily lives. As well as great skill, Ann possessed a cheerful disposition, and the combination won her many admirers. It is to be hoped she was not at her usual spot on the steps of Langdales brewery on the 7 June 1780 when it was attacked in what had started as an anti-papist protest but quickly developed into a riot of drunkenness and disorder. When 120 gallons of gin spilled into the street the mob couldn’t believe its luck but the gin was untreated and so unfit for human

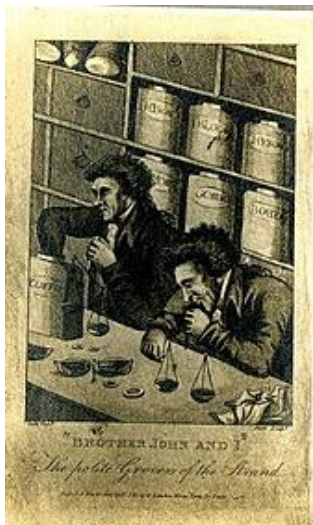


Ann Johnson.

consumption and soon the area was littered with bodies. The fire brigade exacerbated the situation by accidentally spraying more gin into the building and before long the whole area was alight. The incident has gone down as the most notorious in what came to be known as the Gordon Riots, but Ann survived unscathed and was held up as an example to everyone (‘such great industry deserves encouragement’) and was recommended to ‘every little girl or young woman when they are in want of any laces.’

Aaron and John TRIM – the Polite Grocers of the Strand – seem somewhat out of place in a celebration of curiosities. They were, after all just.....polite. There was nothing particularly odd about them except one of the brothers was so short he had to stand on a box to serve customers, but I included them because I like to think great great grandmother Harriet SALTER’s family may have shopped there. Harriet claims to have been born

in the Strand around 1813 but I've been unable to confirm this and she does appear to have been economical with the truth in some other aspects of her life. Nevertheless, we learn that although there were a number of other grocers in the area 'no shop in the neighbourhood (was) so much frequented'



The Trim brothers.

so perhaps the Salters did indeed experience the Trim's excellent service. Known for exercising the 'greatest attention to their customers' with unfailing 'good humour and urbanity of manners,' if they could be said to have a fault it was that the shop was so well stocked that goods took up every available inch of space, leaving just a narrow passageway with room for only one person to be served at a time. Little else is known about the brothers except that they inherited the business from their father ('a man well esteemed') were regular worshippers at the church of St Martin's in the Strand, and occasionally employed a young woman 'to have the management of the Two-penny-post.' A mark of the regard in which the brothers were held is found in this account: 'Abounding as this age does with so many temptations and

examples of extravagance and waste, it requires no small portion of resolution to maintain a due observance of economy, to be kept from following the public current in its wasteful fashions and extravagant expenses. Now, that the Polite Grocers maintain this economy, cannot be doubted; and which, in the present situation of things, must be considered no small virtue. Economy without penuriousness, liberality without prodigality!' And doesn't that sound just as relevant today as it did over two hundred years ago?

It could have all turned out very differently for George ROMONDO. A talented musician and mimic, George was discovered in his native Lisbon by an Italian who persuaded him to seek his fortune in London. He arrived in 1800 and began travelling between fairgrounds in a horse drawn wagon but the promised riches failed to materialise and George was left to scrape a living as best he could. His speciality was animal noises, and apparently these were so realistic that, when he slipped unnoticed (hard to imagine as he as he stood only 3ft 6in and was severely bow-legged) into *The Old Blind*

Beak public house in St Giles, ‘he threw the company into the utmost alarm with the tremendous roaring of a lion.’ Once the panic had subsided he was forgiven and a benefit set up on his behalf. So successful was it that George was able to make a living out of visits to unsuspecting drinking houses throughout London. An affable character rarely seen without a smile on his face, and with an eye for the ladies, George had the unfortunate habit of kissing their elbows as they passed by. His small stature meant this part of their anatomy was ‘exactly parallel with his lips,’ and ever resourceful, George had adapted the art of introduction to suit this. Unfortunately his advances were not always welcome and he received ‘many a box on the ear.’ It’s difficult not to warm to George and his determination to make the best out of every situation. I’ll bet many an enjoyable evening was spent in the drinking establishments of the Capital by this indefatigable animal impersonator and his appreciative audience.

By far my favourite ‘curiosity’ is the gloriously eccentric Martin VAN BUTCHELL. I first became aware of the Mayfair dentist and truss maker when researching my family links to Holborn where VAN BUTCHELL was born in 1735. His father was a Flemish tapestry maker believed to have worked for George II and the young Martin was brought up in some style in a large house in Lambeth . A clever boy, he soon came to the attention of his father’s influential friends and was given every opportunity to succeed in life. His first choice was dentistry and he pursued this for some years, before branching out in to truss making and the curing of fistulas. It was then that this ‘man of uncommon merit and science’ began to show marked eccentricities, growing ‘a beard of enormous length,’ and advertising the hairs as a cure for childlessness, customising his pony by painting it with red spots and a bridle that descended like a blind, and carrying a large white bone to fend off attackers. Increasingly bizarre notices started to appear in his name, this a typical example:–“British Christian Lads (Behold - now is the day – of Salvation. Get understanding, as the highest gain.) Cease looking boyish; become quite manly!-(Girls are fond of hair: it is natural-) Let your beards grow long: that ye may be strong: in mind – and body: as were great grand – dads: - Centuries ago; when John did not owe – a single penny: more than he-could-pay” Even a birth announcement descended into doggerel: “Corresponding – Lads –Remember Judas: - And the year 80: last Monday morning at 7 o’clock, Doctor Merryman, of Queen-street, May-fair presented Elizabeth, the Wife of Martin van Butchell, with her Fifth fine Boy at his House in Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, and - they – are – all – well – post

master general for ten thousand pounds (- we mean gentlemen's - not a penny less -) I will soon construct - such mail - coach perch - bolts as shall never break! To many I refer - for my character: Each will have grace - to write his case; soon as he is well - an history tell; for the public good; - to save human blood, as - all - true -folk shou'd. Sharkish people may - keep themselves away. - Those that use me ill - I never can heal, being forbidden - to cast pearls to pigs; lest - they - turn - and - tear. Wisdom makes dainty: patients come to me, with heavy guineas, - between ten and one; but - I - go - to - none. Signed 'Mender of Mankind in a manly way.'



Martin van Butchell (centre left) visiting Lord George Gordon in Newgate prison.

It comes as no surprise to find VAN BUTCHELL pictured visiting the only slightly less eccentric Lord George GORDON during his imprisonment in Newgate. In a 1793 print the two are shown in conversation along with a number of others. VAN BUTCHELL sports a magnificently bushy beard (Lord George's is longer) and holds an umbrella to which is attached an oval shaped bat. His highly individual touches extended to home life: he insisted on dining alone, refused to address his children by name, summoning them instead by whistling, and gave each of his two wives the choice of wearing either black or white - first wife Mary had chosen black, so second wife Elizabeth opted for white. When Mary died in 1775 it prompted what must surely be VAN BUTCHELL's oddest act and the one for which he is probably best remembered. Unable to bear the thought of being without his

beloved wife, he had her body embalmed and displayed in his shop window as an attraction. There was no shortage of eager sightseers and he was forced to place the following advertisement in the *St James Chronicle*:- ‘Van Butchell (not willing to be unpleasantly circumstance and wishing to convince some good minds that they have been misinformed) acquaints the Curious, no stranger can see his embalmed wife, unless (by a Friend personally) introduced to himself, any day between Nine and One, Sundays excepted.’ When Elizabeth joined the household she persuaded her husband it was time for her predecessor to move on and the body was donated to the Royal College of Surgeons where it remained until the Second World War when a German bomb dispatched both Mary and the parrot that accompanied her. His second marriage was by all accounts a happy one and produced nine children, two of whom entered the medical profession. In 1829 eldest son Edwin Martin VAN BUTCHELL became the first British surgeon to be sued for malpractice after the death of a patient, but was acquitted.

This is just a small selection of those sharing the City with our ancestors. Many places can boast their share of the unusual and bizarre but I like to think London’s are in a class of their own. Samuel JOHNSON certainly thought when he declared ‘By seeing London, I have seen as much of life as the world can show.’ And who would care to argue with that?

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Wikipedia, <https://www.wikipedia.org>

Illustrations:

Nathaniel Bentley sketch *The Book of Wonderful Characters: Memoirs and Anecdotes of Remarkable and Eccentric Persons in all Ages and Countries*, 1809
Henry Wilson, Public Domain

Aaron and John trade card print ‘Brother John and I’ c1793, Public Domain

George Romoldo an eccentric mimic, engraving by G. Scott, Public Domain

Thomas Sugden & Ann Johnson, Curious Characters of Old London

Promenade on the State Side of Newgate, print by Richard Newton, published by William Holland 1793, Public Domain

Please set out your *Help!* request as clearly and succinctly as possible.

All surnames should be in CAPITALS.

Members may have one free entry per journal. There is a £3 charge for each

subsequent entry and for all entries from non-members. Don't forget to include your contact details and your membership number.



JOHN WILLIAM SYMONDS - NAVY

My grandfather, John William Symonds, born 1880 joined the navy in 1896 or 1897 after doing 14 months of a hairdressing apprenticeship. He was invalidated out four years later. I would very much like to know what injury he sustained. It required several operations. Not sure such good naval records were kept for that period but if one could track down the ship, there would be a record of injuries. This was the Royal Navy not the Merchant Navy.

Am still coming back down to earth after uncovering gold at the British Library last Wednesday. I was going through a 1921 issue of the *Hairdresser's Weekly Journal* looking for detail about hairstyles, products and inventions when I came across a photo I recognised. My grandfather!

It announced his appointment in 1921 as President of the British Academy of Hairdressers (London) and with the announcement came a little biog giving me wonderful details of the earlier part of his career. This is why family history is such an addictive hobby. Am still on an incredible high.

And now there are regular mentions in the magazine of meetings of the BAH plus dinners my grandfather gave.

Sally Cox Member No. 7527

Email: sallyjcox@aol.com

P.S. I have found my grandfather's birth certificate, though, which says that he was born 10 September 1882 in Islington East. This is different from what the mini biog in the *Hairdresser's Weekly Journal* said. It said born in 1880.

Note: We found a copy of the naval Service Record of your grandfather, which can be downloaded from The National Archives, Ref: ADM 188/343/198115, this last set of numbers being his service number. With his name in the lovely copperplate typical of Naval records, he saw service on various ships (although land stations bearing such names can't be ruled out) starting with *Impregnable* and ending on 7 June 1900 with

Resolution. Some personal details are listed, such as height and eye colour, and that he was a baker's boy on enlistment when he started as a bugler. I was also intrigued by the clothing and bedding gratuities he received on various dates.

Sadly, although it provides the date when he was discharged, and the reason as 'invalided', it provides no further information as to what that invalidity was. We checked newspapers for 1900 for mention of your grandfather, in case the circumstances were reported, but drew a blank. There was just one article and that was about a George SYMONDS in East Anglia.

Although you did not specifically request this, it may also be of interest to note that he became a Freemason on 16 May 1918 when, at the age of 38, he was Initiated into Yarborough Lodge No. 554 in London. He was a ladies' hairdresser, living at the time in Muswell Hill and became a Master Mason later that same year on 17 October. Founded in 1847 or 1848, the Lodge still meets in the main headquarters in Great Queen Street, London where their library and museum are open to visit.

JOHN WILLIAM SYMONDS - ARMY

Have recently discovered that my grandfather, John William SYMONDS (1880-1939), served in the 5th Middlesex Volunteer Battalion in the Great War. According to a short biography I found in a trade journal: 'he was one of the earliest instructors becoming later officer in charge of "D" company. *A book on Bayonet Fighting* of which he was the author, proved very useful throughout the Volunteer movement'.

Where can I find out more, including where he went and what he did? Is this the army? Before 1914 he had experience of both the Royal and merchant navy so I'm a little surprised that in war he should go into the army. He was a hairdresser by trade.

Should I try the National Archives?

Sally Cox Member No. 7527

Email: sallyjcox@aol.com

Note: We couldn't find anything about his career in the Army on Findmypast (our usual go-to for such records), Ancestry or Forces War Records. We did find three persons called John William SYMONDS but they can all be discounted as one was born in Harrogate; another in Great

Yarmouth; and a third died in 1917. What was unusual is that we couldn't find any medal record mention either of your grandfather and we would have expected at least that to have survived, even if his service record was one of those destroyed by fire. So, something of an impasse at present.

ONLINE FAMILY TREE

I am trying to get family tree templates to use online for publication. I looked at the Beginners Corner in June's *Metropolitan*. I am using Microsoft Excel on my old Mac but could not find a family tree template there, nor could I find one on my Mac Book Pro. I did not seem to have a category. What should I do?

Tony Allen, Member No. 5587

Note: In fact there are some family tree templates on Excel and here is how to access them: Click on File and this will show a number of templates but there will be an arrow indicating 'More templates'.

Click on this and in the dialogue box enter 'Family Tree' and click. It will offer two Family Trees:

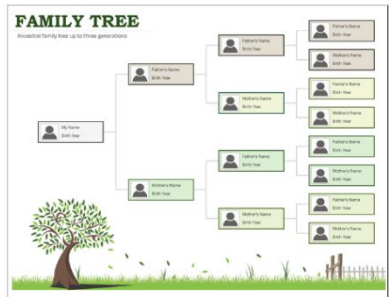


Photo Family Tree

- 1. Photo Family Tree - 3 generations back horizontally and looks quite basic with few details per box. This is it, above on the right.

- 2. Family Tree Generator - a more sophisticated spreadsheet with two tabs. First is a 3-generation listing of family members, pictured below on the right, and second (not shown) is a vertical family tree.



Family Tree Generator

Both seem to me to illustrate how you use the boxes, which all the Excel 'cells' are, to enter required data and then use the line drawing tool to link them. You can use PowerPoint to similar effect but Excel allows searches and data sorting etc.

WHAT IS THE CORRECT ADDRESS?

Might you be able to give me some advice on some addresses and how best to record them more accurately and consistently. I'm putting the information into Family Historian 7 and, at the moment, I'm particularly looking at a family (BENSLEY) who were in the East/New/Friern Barnet/New Southgate area towards the latter part of the 1800s.

Although I know boundaries changed and areas were renamed as the urban area grew, the reason I'm asking is that this family live at a number of addresses over a number of years, but even within one certificate the same address is recorded in several different ways e.g. when they lived at '27 Brunswick Avenue' it was recorded as in East Barnet in the column for 'place of birth' and then as 'Brunswick Avenue, New Southgate' in the 'registered by' column. On another document the same address is recorded as in Friern Barnet.

In 1886, the birth certificate for Lilian BENSLEY has the same address recorded in two ways within the entry: in one column, 2 Richmond Villas, Bulwer Road, Chipping Barnet, East Barnet and in a later column Richmond Villas, New Barnet. It sounds like they may have been unsure which area they lived in even then!!!!

Also, variously, Middlesex, London and Hertfordshire seem to be used in a similar manner on other documents. As there are a number of addresses because they moved a number of times, it's all getting quite confusing as to the correct area names and I haven't quite managed to work out which places and counties would be the most correct for the time!

Family Historian 7 has a section for recording the 'text from source' and I am recording exactly what the documents say into that section, but am wanting to have an overall consistent address to record for each residence to show that I know it is the same place and not that they moved to lots of different locations (that just strangely happened to have the same door number and road name!) and so that I can look them up by the most accurate address for that time. All of this is making me realise how little I know about the areas I visited family in as a child!!

I have been trying to read some histories of the areas to help but if anyone is able to give me any advice on where to look for information on how to get correct addresses or is able to help with specific family addresses, it would be very much appreciated. I can provide details of the addresses and dates I have if needed.

I hope you don't mind me asking another question that I haven't yet found a clear answer for - but is there a particular convention for certain years in how

the addresses were recorded? I've noticed that they often have the road/street hyphenated and use lower case e.g. 10 Arthur-terrace, Holly-park-road.

Anne Langley, Member No. 8315

Note: One of the problems here appears to be new developments which grew up as populations increased, especially near to the railways. Although there was a hamlet in the Ancient Parish of East Barnet known as Betstyle, after the railway came through in the 1850s, more people moved here and it became known as New Southgate. Housing also extended to the south into what was the parish of Edmonton. Brunswick Avenue is in the East Barnet part of New Southgate. This address was definitely not in Friern Barnet, which was on the west side of the railway line. In a similar manner, Richmond Villas, Bulwer Road, is in the New Barnet part of East Barnet. Again, this was built following the development of the railway.

Chipping Barnet, East Barnet and Totteridge Ancient Parishes were historically in Hertfordshire but were surrounded on most sides by Middlesex. These parishes were never in Middlesex themselves but the reorganisation of administrative areas meant that they became part of the London Borough of Barnet in 1965 together with their Middlesex neighbours. They might then be described as being in London.

We try to help with this sort of problem in our Society publications. The *Which Place is Where* booklet shows which place is in which Ancient Parish and our Parish Guides include placenames in each area, so the Friern Barnet Parish Guides states: 'Places in the parish include Colney Hatch, Friern Barnet and most of Whetstone.' Administrative information is also included, such as 'Civil Parishes took over from Ancient Parishes in the 1860s and this was followed by Friern Barnet Urban District Council in 1894. Since 1965, Friern Barnet has formed part of the London Borough of Barnet'.

Wikipedia can be very helpful to. As an example, look up East Barnet Urban District. This shows that it consisted of three civil parishes, East Barnet, Barnet Vale (the area formerly in Chipping Barnet parish) and Monken Hadley (the parts formerly in Middlesex).

You are quite right that people must have been confused themselves to record the same address in various ways!

FORTHCOMING BRANCH MEETINGS

Virtual Branch – Talks are on the second Thursday of the month. ‘Doors’ open at 7.45 for an 8pm start. To attend, you have to initially register an interest by emailing: virtualbranch@lwmfhs.org (This is once only - you do not need to register for each talk). The details of each Zoom meeting will then be emailed to you a few days prior to the event as well as being announced in *Metropolitan*, on our website and Facebook page.

The talk will be recorded (with the speaker’s permission) and reshown the following morning at 10am so that members who live abroad or those who can’t make the live event can watch it at a hopefully more convenient time. Branch Contact: Email: virtualbranch@lwmfhs.org

14 December *Christmas in the City* by Jill Finch.

Despite being known as a financial district the City of London does put on a bit of a show at Christmas. Trees are decorated, lights twinkle, and carols ring out from the churches. Ever since the Romans introduced the winter festival of Saturnalia to Londinium, the people who live and work in the Square Mile have celebrated in many ways. Join City of London Guide Lecturer Jill Finch, to enjoy the Festive Season with a virtual wander through the City streets

11 January *Help! What do I do before 1837? Researching your Ancestors before Civil Registration* by Linda Hammond.

You’ve worked your way back through census records to 1841 and civil registration, ordering some certificates on the way but where do you go from here? We will look at the types of records available to you prior to 1837. Just what is in Parish Registers and where do you find them? We will look at other records available and through an analysis of actual record samples, follow a family from 1851 back through to the 1700s. You’ll discover that it’s not as difficult as you thought it was!

8 February *The Notorious Fraudster Ford: Researching a Criminal Ancestor* by Graham Ford.

LWMFHS member Graham Ford discusses researching the records of our criminal ancestors illustrated by the

life of one of his own and using court, prison and transportation records. Was the Notorious Fraudster Ford more Raffles, gentleman thief, or more Rodney (Trotter), just a bit of a plonker?

This will be preceded by our AGM – see our AGM insert in the middle of this issue of *Metropolitan*.

We do hope to see you at both events.

14 March

Understanding your Old Photos by Stephen Gill.

When you look at an old photo of yours how long do you actually look at it for? A few seconds or a couple of minutes at the most. When restoring a photo I am looking at it for up to a couple of hours and get to see all sorts of details within the picture. If you can ‘see’ those details to them maybe you’ll be able to understand your own family history better and get more information from the photos than you ever thought possible.

Barnet Branch – Talks are on the third Thursday of the month from 7.30pm to 9.30pm at Lyonsdown Hall, Lyonsdown Road, New Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 1JB.

Branch Contact: Email: barnetbranch@lwmfhs.org

21 December	No meeting
18 January	To be announced, see Chairman’s Comments, page 3
15 February	To be announced
21 March	To be announced

Rayners Lane Branch – Talks are on the first Monday of the month. Doors open at 1pm for a 1.30pm start at Roxeth Community Church, Coles Crescent, South Harrow, Middlesex HA2 0TN.

Branch Contact: Email: raynerslanebranch@lwmfhs.org

4 December	Christmas Party
8 January	<i>Why do we research our family</i> - Members’ afternoon
5 February	To be announced
4 March	<i>Turning your tree into a tale</i> by Kathy Chater

SURNAME INTERESTS

The research interests listed here were submitted by members between September and mid November 2023.

Each quarter's members' interests are put onto the website just before the journal is published. If you would like to contact a member whose interests are listed, please go <https://lwmfhs.org/surname-interests/> In the search box, type the name you are interested in and a list of entries will appear if a match is found. Click Contact and this brings up an email for you to fill in.

Interests shown are from members: 8355; 8455; 8456; 8459; 8462

Name	Period	County	Parish / Area	Mem.No.
ALDWIN	1655-1870	MDX	Harrow on the Hill	8455
AYLOTT	1825 to date	MDX	Edmonton, Enfield	8456
BARNFIELD	1876	MDX	Spitalfields	8456
BISHOP	1862 to date	MDX	St Pancras	8456
CARTER	1800-1930	MDX	Marylebone	8462
DESOER	1700-1800	MDX	Holborn	8355
DESOIR	1700-1800	MDX	Holborn	8355
HUSSEY	1800-1930	MDX	Marylebone	8462
KNIGHTLY	Any	HRT	Stocking Pelham	8456
SOAMES	1600-1850	LND	St Dunstan	8455
WARREN	1885 to date	MDX	St Pancras	8456
WILKINS	1780-1890	MDX	Finsbury, St Luke	8459
WRIGHT	1780-1890	MDX	Finsbury, St Luke	8459

Surname interests are rather under-used at the moment. Other members researching your name can be contacted and information shared. You may find that someone else has photographs of your family which you have never seen before. If you would like your family names added to this database, then please contact us at surnames@lwmfhs.org

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the new members, number 8440 - 8475 who have joined the Society over the past few months and wish them well with their research.

AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

- 1 To encourage the study of family history, genealogy and heraldry, primarily in the City of London, City of Westminster and the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Camden, part of Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow, part of Hillingdon, and Islington.
- 2 To help to co-ordinate efforts to make local records more accessible.
- 3 To carry out such activities as are relevant to a family history society

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The annual subscription covers all family members living at one address, with one journal and one vote per subscription.

There are three subscription rates: £12, £15 and £20 depending on where you live and how your journal *Metropolitan* is delivered.

Our year runs from 1 October until 30 September the following year.

Members joining during the Society's year will receive back copies of journals.

£12 UK & Overseas: to receive *Metropolitan* electronically by download

£15 UK: to receive *Metropolitan* by post

£20 Overseas: to receive *Metropolitan* by airmail post

CHEQUE PAYMENT BY UK OR OVERSEAS MEMBERS

UK cheques are payable to LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FHS.

Overseas members' payments must be made in pounds sterling by cheque, drawn upon a London Bank, made payable to: LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FHS.

All cheques should be sent to the Membership Secretary, address on the inside front cover.

CANADA: Canadian Postal Money Orders cannot be accepted.

AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND: Most banks will provide sterling cheques.

OTHER WAYS TO PAY

- Set up a standing order payable on 1 October annually (bank details below);
- Make a payment directly into our bank account (details below);
- Pay through Parish Chest directly from our website lwmfhs.org.uk or our stall on the Parish Chest
- Post a cheque to the Membership Secretary (details inside the front cover) giving your name and, if possible, membership number (which is on the email notifying you of your electronic version of *Metropolitan*, or on the address sheet sent with your paper copy).

BANKERS: Santander Business Banking, Bridle Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L30 4GB

Sort Code: 09-01-29; Account Number: 70580978

Business account name: London Westminster & Middlesex Family History Society

MEMBERS' DATA

A labels-list of members is held on computer for the purposes of administration and distribution only.

Data from the members' list will NOT be given out to commercial enterprises.

Anyone objecting to his or her name being on this list should write to the Membership Secretary.

METROPOLITAN Copy Dates: **1 Feb, 1 May, 1 Aug, 1 Nov.**